

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
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UNCLAS DAMASCUS 4550

ALEXANDRIA FOR S/S

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: SOPN, SY, US
SUBJECT: SYRIAN PRESS COMMENTARY ON US MIDEAST DIPLOMACY

1. SYRIAN EDITORIAL AUGUST 8 ON VANCE MISSION SPECULATES
THAT AMONG HIS GOALS ARE:

--ASSESSING AREAS OF COMMONALITY IN THE POSITIONS OF
THE TWO SIDES;

--EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITY OF REVIVING WORK ON A
DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES WITH A VIEW TOWARD BRINGING
NEW PARTIES INTO THE NEGOTIATIONS;

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--DETERMINING HOW SERIOUSLY THE TWO SIDES, PARTICULARLY
THE EGYPTIANS, ARE IN TAKING THEIR HARDLINE STANDS: AND

--DISCUSSING THE SITUATION IN LEBANON.

2. OVERALL THE SECRETARY IS SEEN WORKING TO GET THE PARTIES
TO REVERT TO QUIET DIPLOMACY BUT ACCUSATIONS CONTINUE

THAT THE US, EGYPT, AND ISRAEL VIEW LEBANON AS A PRESSURE POINT AGAINST SYRIA. EDITORIAL CLAIMS THAT: "IF AFTER THEIR ASSESSMENT THE PARTIES TO THE SETTLEMENT BECOME CONVINCED OF THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF BRINGING NEW PARTIES INTO THE DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS, THEN CHANCES ARE THAT THEY WILL BE DISCUSSING WAYS AND MEANS TO REKINDLE THE FLAMES OF CONFLAGRATION IN LEBANON."

3. PREVIOUS DAY'S EDITORIAL IN AL-BAATH IS EVEN MORE ACCUSATORY. BAATH VIEWS THE SECRETARY'S TRIP AS A SYMBOLIC MESSAGE THAT "THE AMERICAN 'PEACE GAME' IS NOT ONLY CONTINUING BUT IS IN ITS EXPLORATORY BEGINNING. THEREFORE, A SETTLEMENT EVEN ALONG SADAT'S CAPITULATORY LINE IS NOT IN SIGHT...ISRAEL AND THE US ARE NOT CONVINCED THAT THE BORDERS OF THE CURRENT ZIONIST AGGRESSION ARE ISRAEL'S FUTURE BORDERS NOR ARE THEY CONVINCED THAT 'PEACE' IS IN ANY WAY COMPATIBLE WITH THE MOTIVES FOR ISRAEL'S PRESENCE IN THE AREA...IT HAS BECOME CLEAR THAT THE TRANSFORMATION OF LEBANON INTO A THEATER FOR A DEVASTATING WAR PARALLEL TO THE SINAI AGREEMENT IS NOTHING BUT A STEP IN THE SCHEME OF A MAJOR AMERICAN PLOT AGAINST THE ARAB HOMELAND."

4. A MORE REASONED COMMENTARY INDICATIVE OF OFFICIAL THINKING APPEARED AUGUST 7 IN TISHR IN. IT NOTED THAT, "IT HAS BEEN PROVED" THAT RELIANCE ON THE US ALONE CANNOT UNCLASSIFIED

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LEAD TO A BALANCED AND ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION TO THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT, AND THAT SADAT'S "CAPITULATION" ONLY HARDENED THE ISRAELI NEGOTIATING POSITION. IT ADVOCATES AS THE ONLY LOGICAL COURSE FOR THE ARABS CHECKING ISRAEL'S MILITARY FORCE AND BRINGING ABOUT A SUITABLE ATMOSPHERE FOR ATTAINING A JUST PEACE. IT CALLS FOR ESTABLISHING "A STRATEGIC EQUILIBRIUM" WITH ISRAEL "THAT WOULD MAKE ANY ISRAELI ATTEMPT TO USE FORCE TO IMPOSE ITS WILL ON THE ARABS AN ADVENTURE OF UNCERTAIN CONSEQUENCES."

5. FINALLY, TISHRIIN ON AUGUST 8 IN COMMENTING ON WHAT SADAT MUST DO TO RETURN TO THE ARAB FOLD MAKES NOT ONLY THE USUAL DEMANDS THAT HE ANNOUNCE HIS "FAILURE" AND CLOSE ALL CHANNELS OF CONTACT WITH ISRAEL, BUT HE IS ALSO ASKED TO WITHDRAW "THE AUTHORIZATION GIVEN TO THE US TO DEAL WITH THE QUESTION OF A MIDEAST SETTLEMENT." PELLETREAU

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